

How to prevent outbreaks

Studying earlier outbreaks in Asia, we now know that poultry has played a vital role in spreading the disease (poultry transports) and transmitting it to humans. Moreover, there is not any evidence of wild birds spreading the disease to humans. Poultry is also in common more receptive for H5N1. This all shows that a lot of attention should be paid to poultry.

What we shouldn't do

Killing all birds in an infected area is not only virtually impossible, it is also absolutely the wrong approach. After studying the earlier outbreak in Asia among wild birds, it is clear that infected and therefore ill birds, only move when there is an urgent reason. Examples of this are the extreme cold in Asia or disturbances like hunting in a specific site. When trying to kill all birds, disturbance will be the main effect, resulting in a further spread. An outbreak is most likely to die out naturally, to be self limiting, if left undisturbed.

Wetlands International does not stand alone in this position but finds the UN-led task force on avian influenza behind it.

What we should do

Wetlands International has a clear answer how to deal with outbreaks:

- 1) Investigate mortality in wild and domestic birds to detect the range of the outbreaks
- 2) Minimise disturbances of wild birds, such as hunting, as it will make the birds fly to other areas.
- 3) Prevent any contact between wild and domestic birds; for instance by regulations regarding free range poultry.
- 4) Control all transport of poultry and poultry products in regions around outbreaks.

Scientific articles on Avian Influenza

[Potential spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 by wildfowl: dispersal ranges and rates determined from large-scale satellite telemetry - by Gaidet et al.](#) (including our own Taej Mundkur) in Journal of Applied Ecology

[Assessing the risks of the spread of avian influenza through long-distance bird migration - by Gaidet et al.](#) (including our own Taej Mundkur) in Journal of Applied Ecology